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S-E-C-R-E-T

COMMUNIST USE OF CAMBODIA IN SUPPORT OF THE WAR IN SOUTH VIETNAM

I. Potential Use of Cambodian Territory

If the Cambodian government were openly to permit the use of its territory to support Communist military activities in South Vietnam, the Viet Cong would achieve many logistic and military advantages, while losing some political benefits resulting from Cambodian neutralism. They would gain overt access to about 600 miles of Cambodian-South Vietnamese border territory which they could use for sanctuary areas and for storage areas, rest camps, training facilities, hospitals, and workshops. They could, moreover, develop a major and secure supply system into the delta area of South Vietnam. This supply system would have the capacity to move the additional 1,200 tons* of military supplies which we estimate could be handled daily by the port of Sihanoukville. (See the attached map). This capability is more than seven times the maximum projection -- 165 tons -- of the daily external logistic support requirement of greatly expanded VC/PAVN forces fighting at highly intensified levels of combat in South Vietnam. The capability of VC/PAVN forces to wage war in the central highlands of South Vietnam, however, would not be affected measurably by the use of Cambodian territory. The central highlands area is more easily and directly supplied through Laos.

Even without the cooperation of the Cambodian government, the Communists could make significant use of Cambodian territory. They could expand the current type of small-scale infiltration by sending more people to purchase supplies in the open market and by making more use of the legitimate import houses and the Vietnamese Communist cell in Phnom Penh. Supplies obtained through these organizations have been moved across the border by smugglers and other clandestine means. There are also remote border areas of Cambodia which are not under effective control of the national government. These areas have, in fact, been used both for sanctuary purposes and as military bases. There is also evidence of collusion and cooperation between local Cambodian officials and the Viet Cong. Because the Cambodian government in many cases has been unaware of or unable to control these activities at local levels, the capability of the Communists to exploit the situation must be taken for granted.

* Tonnages are given in short tons.

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We would estimate, therefore, that through a combined use of normal commercial channels and clandestine means the Communists could procure and move moderate amounts of supplies through Cambodia. They would certainly be able to do this to the extent necessary to supplement the existing logistical system through Laos. Since the capacity of the supply system through Laos is well in excess of current VC/PAVN requirements, the use of Cambodia as an infiltration route is more a matter of convenience than of necessity. Although the recent USIB Memorandum, Infiltration and Logistics - South Vietnam, 20 October 1965, [redacted] was unable to quantify the volume of supplies moving through Cambodia, such volume was regarded as small, probably not exceeding 1 to 2 tons daily. The Communists almost certainly have the capability to increase this volume substantially. It is doubtful that the Communists, through clandestine means alone, could move, on a sustained basis, the 12 tons of military supplies needed daily by the VC/PAVN forces in South Vietnam. This doubt arises principally from the fact that illicit traffic of this volume could hardly clear the port of Sihanoukville without detection. If the 12 tons could be landed at Sihanoukville or other points along the coast, however, the Communists could undoubtedly move them forward into South Vietnam. At a minimum, the ability of the Communists to move goods clandestinely through Cambodia would be sufficient to provide an important adjunct to infiltration of supplies by sea.

25X1

II. Possible Expansion of the Current Level of Logistic Support Through Cambodia

Our memorandum of 8 December set forth the current estimate held at Headquarters with regard to the type and amount of logistic support that the Communists have been receiving from and through Cambodia. Cables received [redacted] during the past week reassure us that no information is available that would appear to change the conclusions of the USIB memorandum mentioned above. Cambodia is still believed to play a relatively minor role in the Viet Cong logistics effort. Recent MACV information that 25 tons per day is moving into South Vietnam from Cambodia is described by the Saigon station as a pure "guesstimate," totally unsupported by other than the belief that the ammunition used by Communist forces in the fighting in western Pleiku must have transited Cambodia, apparently along route 19 through Ratanakiri Province.

25X1

Preliminary photographic analysis by NPIC, however, reveals sufficient activity to indicate that Communist forces are moving between the border area of this province and South Vietnam. The activity involves well-used footpaths and huts of a construction that is not indigenous to the area. The analysis failed, however, to show any road crossing the border in this area. A new road has been constructed from route 19 extending southeast and then east for about 7-1/2 miles to within 2 miles of the border. Just to the south of the end of the road, near the border, is an area of about 3 square miles that is covered with footpaths which are mostly oriented north and south but some of which cross the border. The photo-interpreters believe that these footpaths are indications of Communist activity because only a few natives live in this area and do not travel very much.

Additional photographic analysis also shows that the extreme northeastern tip of Ratanakiri Province is being used by the Communists for rather extensive insurgent activity, but there are no known land transport connections between this area and the Cambodian transport system. Instead the area is connected to the Laotian corridor by a heavily used natural-surface dry weather road and a major improved trail. From the area, well-used trails extend eastward into Kontum Province. The cumulative throughput capability into South Vietnam by means of the Laos corridor for the current dry season is estimated at 150 to 200 tons

daily. It is believed that this amount would enter South Vietnam further north and that only a small part of it could be moved into the northeastern tip of Cambodia.

25X1

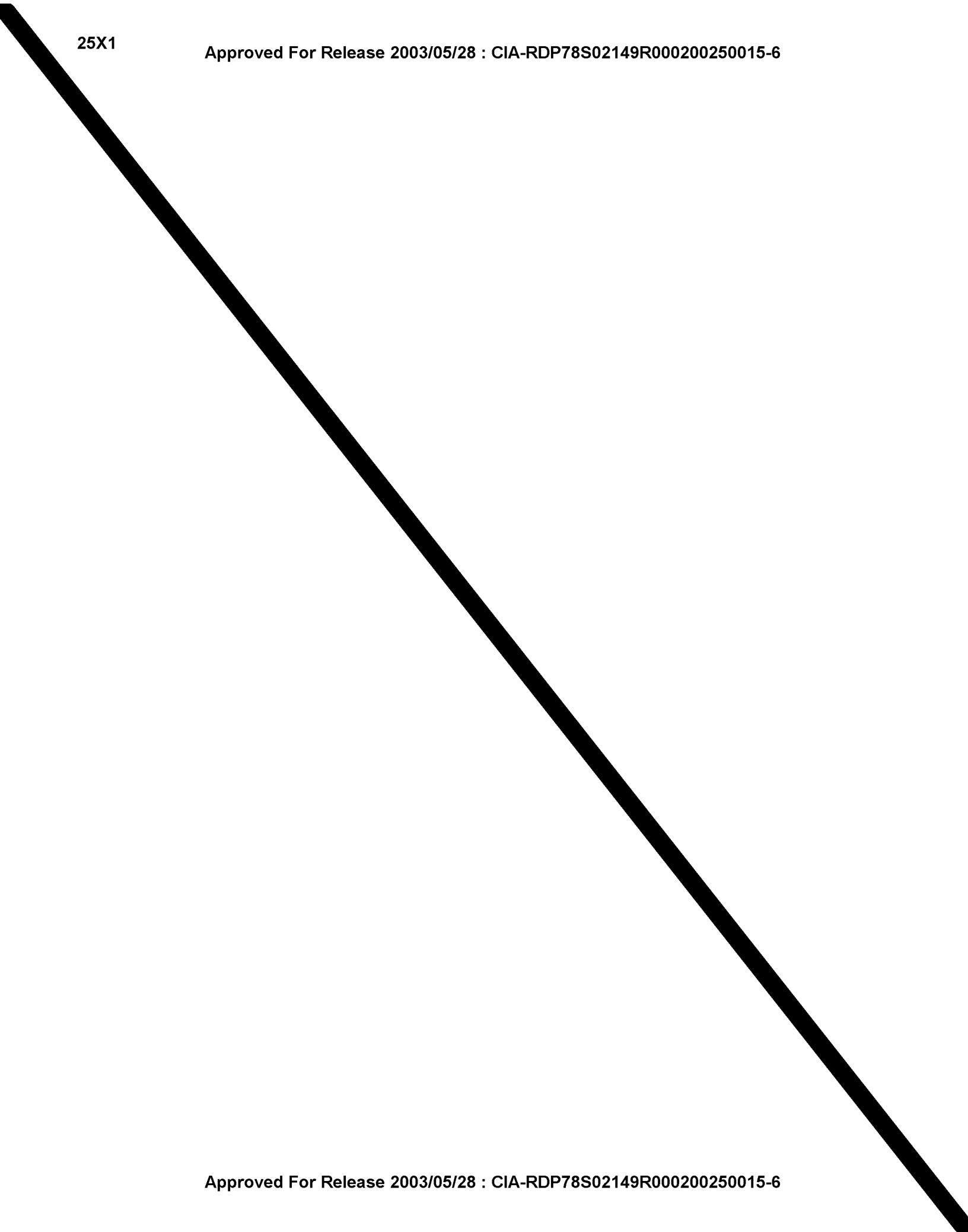
[redacted]

It is believed that the Viet Cong in the delta area can get all the rice they need from within South Vietnam. If the 5,500 tons were to be delivered to the border of Kontum Province, where the Viet Cong have internal distribution problems, the amount would be significant. Sales of this magnitude should not be interpreted to mean that the Cambodian government, although sympathetic to the Viet Cong, would engage in large-scale logistic support against which US/GVN reaction could be expected.

Cambodia has requested the ICC to inspect Cambodian military establishments and to conduct "strict control" over the port of Sihanoukville in order to investigate charges that arms for the Viet Cong are moving through Cambodia. If the Cambodian government continues its present stance of officially not permitting the Communists to use Cambodian territory, the Communists can still increase the scope of their current supply operations in Cambodia. Many areas of the border are wide open to smuggling. Thus more porters could be used on the trails and more small craft could be used on the coastal and inland waterways. Occasionally trucks could even be used on certain routes that are under Viet Cong control at the border crossing. However, the type of goods that the Viet Cong could obtain in this way would probably continue to be limited to goods bought in the open market in Cambodia or goods imported through legal import channels. Regular imports of war materiel -- for example, potassium chlorate used for explosives -- through legal channels probably could not be covered up very long.

25X1

[redacted]



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XII. Maximum Use of the Cambodian Transport System

If Cambodia were to give open cooperation, a comparatively large volume of supplies for the Viet Cong could enter the port of Sihanoukville. During 1964, this port handled about 800,000 tons of goods, of which 320,000 tons were imports. Under normal port operations, the port could handle additional imports of at least 450,000 tons per year, or an average of about 1,200 tons per day. Besides the major port of Sihanoukville, Cambodia has three minor ports (Kompot, Kep, and Ream) which are used mostly for fishing and naval activities. A small additional amount of tonnage could be delivered at these ports, but only one of them -- Kompot -- can accommodate small oceangoing ships. For the most part, offloading at these ports would take place in the roadstead through the use of lighters. Clearance from Sihanoukville and the minor ports would be mainly by road transport, although coastal water transport using small craft would also be available. Cambodia is estimated to have about 10,000 trucks, and more could easily be imported. A railroad from Sihanoukville to Phnom Penh has been under construction for about 5 years, but a number of major bridges and most of the tracklaying on the 160-mile route remain to be completed.

The roads leading out of Sihanoukville have a greater capacity than the port itself and could easily handle 1,200 tons of military supplies for shipment to South Vietnam. The major route which would be used to clear the port is route 4, the 145-mile Sihanoukville - Phnom Penh American Friendship Highway. This route has a capacity of 3,150 tons per day in the dry season and 7,350 tons per day in the rainy season. From Phnom Penh the best route to the border is route 1, which extends east to the southeastern border of Tay Ninh Province. It has a capacity of 4,200 tons per day in the dry season and 1,800 tons per day in the rainy season. The movement of 1,200 tons daily from Sihanoukville to the border on this route would require from 1,500 to 2,000 trucks.* There are also two routes that extend north from the Phnom Penh area and connect with route 7, which approaches the northern border of Tay Ninh Province. These routes have lower capacities than route 1, especially in the rainy season, and the distance to the border is greater. From Phnom Penh, there are two other slightly shorter routes that extend to the border of Kien Giang and Chau Doc Provinces. At least 1,200 tons per day could be moved over these two routes throughout the year.

* Assuming that each truck carries 3.5 tons.

The shortest route from Sihanoukville to the South Vietnamese border is a comparatively low-capacity 115-mile route that follows the south coast (route 3 to Kampot and routes 16 and 17 to the border of Kien Giang Province). The limiting sector of this route has a capacity of 1,100 tons per day in the dry season. In the rainy season, however, the capacity drops to 150 tons a day. Thus it is likely that this route would not be used to any great extent, except for movement of supplies that might be brought to the minor ports of Kampot or Kep.

Except for routes 1 and 7/22 into Tay Ninh Province, the South Vietnamese government has checkpoints at the border crossings of each of these major routes; thus goods would have to be dispersed at some point short of the border and be moved on local roads, trails, and waterways. On routes 1 and 7/22, however, the border crossing points are under Viet Cong control.

Coastal and inland waterways that cross the South Vietnamese border in the delta area or follow along the border could be used as alternates to the truckable routes. The major inland waterway, the Mekong River system, has a capacity, with craft readily available, to move at least 6,000 tons per day south to the border. Oceangoing craft of up to 11 feet in draft may travel on the Mekong below Phnom Penh at all times, and craft with greater draft could be used during periods of high water. Three of the other navigable rivers that cross the border have smaller safe drafts, ranging up to 8 feet at high water. The junks used in this area of the world very in size and design, but the most general type is about 65 feet long and 15 feet wide and has a draft of about 6 feet and a capacity of about 100 tons. Junks of this type, if loaded to less than capacity, could use at least four rivers during periods of high water and at least three rivers during periods of low water. Flat-bottomed sampans can be used on these four rivers at all times and on other rivers during high water. The sampans vary in type and range in capacity from 5 to 120 tons.

The Canal de Vinh Te lies in South Vietnam along the Cambodian border. This canal connects the Gulf of Siam with the Rach Giang Thanh, the Riviere de Takeo, and the Fleuve Bassac. Thus coastal and inland water transport together provide another means that could be used to move supplies from Sihanoukville and the minor ports. The 18-1/2 miles section of the canal from the Gulf to Giang Thanh can take craft with drafts of up to about 8 feet and possibly larger. From Giang Thanh to Chau Doc on the Bassac, a distance of 41 miles, the canal becomes more shallow and can take a maximum draft of only about three feet.

Supplies could also be moved north from Phnom Penh by a combination of river and road transport to Kong Treng; then on route 13, which is a poor road, to the vicinity of the border; and finally over trails to the VC/PAVN forces in Kontum and Pleiku Provinces. This route is a long and difficult one within Cambodia and has less capacity to serve these areas in the central highlands than do the routes through Laos and within South Vietnam.